

Skilled nursing facilities: assessing quality

ISSUE: Is the information Medicare currently collects on SNF patients adequate to assess the quality of the care? If not, what information is needed and how could it be obtained?

KEY POINTS: Medicare has a responsibility to monitor and assess quality of care for SNF patients in nursing facilities. Currently, with the exception of three SNF patient quality indicators CMS currently posts on their website, most of the information collected on SNF patients is embedded in information collected for nursing facilities broadly; no distinction is made between SNF and nursing patients. Yet experts told us that because goals of care are so different between long-term nursing patients and short-stay patients it is important to collect information specific to those patients.

MedPAC staff reviewed the literature on SNF quality and measures of quality and spoke with researchers, clinicians, quality improvement experts, CMS representatives and industry stakeholders to better understand the kinds of quality problems patients might experience in SNFs and to assess how CMS might improve its information on SNF quality. Experts noted several areas of concern which could be measured by CMS and suggested mechanisms to obtain the information with new tools or improved collection and analysis of MDS.

In this paper, we describe the distinction between short-stay SNF patients and long-term nursing patients in nursing facilities, current efforts to measure SNF quality and the findings from our interviews on what quality issues are important to SNF patients and suggestions of ways to improve quality measurement in this setting of care.

ACTION: The Commission should provide feedback on the direction the staff is taking in its assessment of current SNF quality measurement and which of the strategies you believe would be most useful.

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